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A UNIVERSAL TELOS THE PRESUPPOSITION OF ALL INQUIRY.¹

BY WILLIAM BOULTING.

Any act of thought, however simple, expresses the confidence which reason reposes alike on its own activity and on the object of reason as the correlate of that activity. The exercise of thought implies the interdependence of phenomena and the unity of the phenomenal world. Without this sublime confidence in the efficiency of thought, this presupposition that the process and the object of thought are of the self-same nature, we could not think at all. All thought is an effort to explain, to make clear, to arrive at a sufficient reason in which the movement shall receive its satisfaction and justification.

The refutation of scepticism involves the recognition that everything has a ground or reason. The philosophic aim is ever to arrive at some truth or series of connected truths which shall embrace the universe and leave nothing outside of itself; and, while the philosopher may doubt, with Lotze, whether the human orbit has sufficient sweep to give so vast a parallax, he never loses the conviction that such truth *is*, even if it be but very partially obtainable by man.

This reliance of thought on itself means more than the assertion that A is A; it states more than that experience shows that similar results may be expected to follow similar conditions. It ever attempts to arrive at an explanation of the relations of phenomena which shall be self-evident and conclusive; which shall be such a sufficient reason as shall admit of no further questioning. This is ever the goal of thought; the presupposition which underlies its activity. It can never be proved, because it is the very ground of the processes of logic; because it is the self-begotten confidence on which the search for truth depends. In so much as the object of inquiry is so far completely recognized that the demands of thought are satisfied, that no further explanation is necessary, we deem that we possess a complete explana-

¹ A paper read before the London Philosophical Society, June, 1887.

tion—truth. But, if we are unable so completely to exhaust the inquiry as to arrive at this result, we do not, therefore, suppose, with the sceptics, that the explanation does not exist—that there is no truth. We never lose our confidence that there is truth, though as yet undiscovered by us.

Thought, then, presupposes its own efficiency and the reasonableness implied, if not wholly revealed, in its object. It does not presuppose the infallibility of its exercise, but it confidently rests on the postulate that when the data given in the world are sufficient and are properly taken, then the world will exhibit itself as reason—a reason which will explain even the errors and shortcomings of the search for truth. Without this underlying confidence the exercise of thought would be impossible. The very first act of thought as a relationing activity presupposes its supreme and indisputable authority in the domain of experience; the last act of thought could only take place when the self-evidence of the universe—the recognition of its nature as self-complete, as a fact of Perfect Reason, had been attained. Thought, then, presupposes its own efficiency and the reasonableness of its object.

Hence it is that the transcendentalist clings with unswerving faith to what Mr. Rigg has aptly called the “Rock of Self-Consciousness.” An analysis of mental states reveals the fact that the knower must be eternally present to the series of the known. Further analysis is unnecessary, because, once perceived, the explanation, in so far as it has been required, leaves nothing further to be explained. The philosophical inquiry issues in a result sufficient and self-evident—just the kind of result the true nature of which Descartes imperfectly grasped when he insisted that the trustworthiness of ideas depended on their being “*claires et distinctes*.” The question of *how* has been answered by the Transcendental student in so far as it has been asked. But the question of *why* has not even been put. It is a question which belongs to the wider series of problems relating to the unifying of the object of consciousness and what that object points to. When the unity of the one subject of experience is ascertained, what further unity must be ascribed to the phenomenal universe yet remains a problem unsolved.

The mere formal unity of self-consciousness does not give a final solution to the problem of philosophy. The rational consistency

and vital meaning of the universe remains unexplained. If we once refuse to acquiesce in the self-refutation that lies perdu in scepticism there is no other goal for thought than a direct and full perception of its own self-consistence. In other words, the requirements of reason and the obviousness of the fact that the limitations of reason are one with itself demand a unity of being wherein knowledge shall be a complete and all-embracing system of rational relations, and the broken and fragmentary experiences, the intolerable contradictions, the sin and sorrow, the fever and fret of the particular life, shall receive full justification. Whatever philosophical refinements may be introduced, whatever philosophical discoveries remain to be made, I take it that no sober thinker would ever dream of a time when the mere human might be enabled to view the whole as from the throne of Omniscience, and pronounce it "very good." The very incompleteness and impossibility of completeness of the merely human life demands and points to God as the Reason which, whatever else He may be, implies and fulfils the particular determinations of the one spirit in His human life.

And here there arises a difficulty. For the question naturally arises whether we are to regard God as eternally become, and if so, whether it is possible to conceive of the changing phenomenal world as deducing itself from an eternally complete fact of knowledge; or whether we are to conceive of God as the eternal Knower, not merely of the reason for His varied human life, but of that life as dependent on process. In other words, are we to conceive of the ground of our knowing as itself a process? I approach this difficult and perhaps insoluble problem with no little diffidence and hesitation. It seems to me that the difficulty of deducing becoming from an eternally complete truth arises from ignoring the fact that the presupposition of the validity of thought lies deeper than the category of time. Our knowledge, which is timeless, though of time, is indeed ever unexhausted and inexhaustible, and we can only represent to ourselves this incomplete and insoluble character of it in a time and space form. But the self-confidence of our reason is presupposed in, and lies deeper than, its time or space exercise, and there are antinomies in our cosmological conceptions, the necessary solution of which seems to me to imply some higher category in which they find their unification.

That our human life has a meaning, and that that meaning must be known to the one Knower, is, in my thinking, transparently clear; and this implies that our human life in time does not pass into nothingness, but is a means whereby that Will of Perfect Reason, which is its ground and end, possesses itself. And while we know from experience that this necessary and divine meaning implies process in man, I cannot pretend to the philosophical acumen of those who would exhibit it as itself a process. But let us suppose that the view I have just expressed be incorrect, and the opposite opinion be accepted, namely, that God, regarded as the synthesizing Knower of His life in man, is also the Knower of infinite change, I must confess that, for my own part, I do not exactly see why we should be compelled to posit a changing life beside the eternal and complete meaning, and the human life which that meaning involves. But if this view be insisted on, as it is, doubtless, as the issue of much reflection, then I am bold enough to give no hesitating reason for my confidence that such a view cannot but imply that the changes of the divine life must be so interconnected that they are expressive of one complete meaning which involves them, and which they fulfil. For if there is not present to this everchanging life of Deity the eternal reason for itself, it is manifest that there is an unreasonable and capricious element in the Divine Life. But caprice is the illusion of a limited experience, and is inconsistent with that confidence in the reason that is immanent in the world which lies as the very heart of philosophic as of all inquiry.

While we are bound to ascribe to God the fulfilment of all his manifestations in you and me, it seems to me that we cannot pretend to discover the concrete actuality of His thought. Yet we can, as I venture to think, confidently refute the view that the Divine Life is an endless becoming to which we need attribute no permanent direction. We cannot envisage the demands of our reasonable faith in God in such a conception. An analysis of the human mind does, indeed, point to an actual awareness which is its ground. Whether this awareness is to be thought of as itself process it is, perhaps, impossible for man to determine, though it seems to me (and I shall further develop my position in the course of this paper) that the balance of evidence is against such a view. But even if the data are adequate to the absolute determining of

this problem, the human experience, as dependent and contingent, can never yield concrete and precise knowledge of that actuality which derives its being from no source but itself.

Our attempt at knowledge of any kind presupposes that the object which reveals itself is already in some form or other there-existent—and efficient to produce knowledge in us. Our gradual entrance into knowledge—becoming—is a category whereby the already there, which implies it, enters into human knowledge. Our thought, as human and particular, is not an all-embracing, synthesizing activity, and hence can never realize God's nature in its concrete actuality. But what we can be quite sure of is, that the presupposition, without which we could not think at all, and the essential oneness of the Thinker, and of the Thinker and his thought, point with an infallible certitude to an existence—self-consciousness—on which this little round of human consciousness is dependent, and in which it finds its absolute fulfilment. The fundamental presupposition of thought implies a self-consistent, self-dependent knowledge, leaving nothing outside itself. It implies but it does not expound.

The scientific conception of the universe is too often appealed to even by men of some metaphysical insight as if it were an infallible canon. That science has genuine actuality and affirmative reality is indisputable. But the exact nature of its validity is yet a desideratum in philosophy, and perhaps will remain so until further discoveries re-create the current concepts which the best informed scientists are aware to be for the most part provisional and hypothetical only. Again, it is obvious that a cosmology as based on effects wrought on us can never give us the concrete actuality which produces them in us. A completely satisfying knowledge about the universe would not be the same as the awareness which it reflects. It must be of the same nature, but it cannot be the same thing. The knowledge of an act is not the act.

Nevertheless, there is one point in the philosophy of scientific method which I think it will be fruitful to consider, because, even if it does not (as it appears to me distinctly to do) throw considerable doubt on the legitimacy of the transfer of process from the phenomenal world to its ground, it certainly does give warrant to the belief in a permanent direction in that process if it exists.

An event is only comprehended in so far as it takes its place in a system of knowledge in which it becomes more than itself. Hence that uniformity of Nature which is explicated by the scientist and which is implied in the confidence of reason in itself is more than a mere recognition of the law of identity; more even than an admission that uniform precedents are invariably followed by uniform consequents if there be no external interference. It assumes (and this assumption Science may or may not formulate but invariably trusts in her inquiries), it assumes that even the disturbing and interfering elements are subject to law; that change, too, is uniform; that change of law is again due to law. Science supplies herself with the self-same large imagination as Laplace, and supposes with him the world at any one moment to be the necessary outcome of all its antecedent, and the necessary condition of all its future, states. Any one moment stands in relation to an infinite series extending in both directions.

Now, while our knowledge must enter into the very nature of the awareness from which, as its ground, it derives itself, it would seem to me to be an eminently pregnable and unwarranted assumption to posit any kind of direct correspondence or transfigured identity between events in the phenomenal universe and events as they may occur in the supposed "life" of God. But if this huge assumption is made in order to give a support to science (which in my humble judgment stands in no need of such a crutch,) then, as an idealist, I am unable to understand what this conception of the relations of this infinite series may mean, except that, as related, they are *uno ictu* and eternally present to a mind. Science happily occupies herself but little in the construction of philosophical flying-machines, but if we choose to fasten on her an indication of a changing life for God, then our bold philosophy will at once receive a challenge from the absolute relatedness of God's entire universe and we shall be checked by the inscrutability of the way in which the meaning of the whole is ever preserved in the changing universal life.

But does science in any way point to process as the ground of process? Continuity in the representation is of course indispensable to a being who rises from sensible appearances in time-relations to supersensible concepts; but deeper far than continuity

in time and space, lies that presupposition of Unity which is the *sine qua non* of science no less than of philosophy.

Science, as the effort of man to universalize himself, rises from the sensibles of experience to the supersensible. But in the fair, undisputed, and logical pursuit of her abstractions, she soon finds herself involved in inexplicable and probably contradictory results. From the limited data of sense-experience Science is perpetually soaring only to impale herself on the horns of dilemmas. Unless she refutes herself with the sceptic she must either retrace her steps or place in God as the ground of our finite apprehension a perfect logical harmony, unifying what is for us contradictory. It would seem as if in many cases the last alternative is the only mode of escape. The space and time forms yield an abundance of antinomies, and the logical mind of Jevons, in his examination of scientific method, was forced to recognize this fact. He even went so far as to say that, "For all that I can see, then, there may be intellectual existences in which both time and space are nullities." ("Principles of Science," chap. xxxi.) Of course, from my point of view, the Divine Knowing must always be *of* time and space, inasmuch as it is the completion and unifying of God's particular life in man; but it need not be itself a process in time and space.

But, to return to an examination of the procedure of the scientific thinker. Science receives her impetus and has achieved her successes by conceiving of the whole universe as a universe of events everywhere connected; and she forthwith proceeds, by means of the hypothetical judgment, to discover these connections, explanations of observed facts, or laws; and from these again to foretell facts not yet experienced. The scientific conception is not merely that of the invariability of similar results under similar conditions, but that all change whatever is expressible in the form of that abstract reconstruction or method of valid registration which we call Law. Law is led up to by the hypothetical judgment, but its ultimate guarantee is other than mere experience or experiment. The hypothetical judgment may yield and experiment confirm a rule, but the guarantee of a true law is its self-evidence, the reduction to plain absurdity of any other explanation. No fresh laws can obtain any more than fresh phenomena can arise except as ever implied and involved in all an-

tecedent existence. For science, there is no caprice, nor mere empirical observation, but a conviction which it trusts and which never fails it, that there is an inner connection of phenomena, which from time to time and in part it discovers. The world for the scientist is never a mere series of more or less connected events, but a world of which every changing moment implies all the past and all the future. This world is expressible by the double expedient of fixing and recording changing phenomena in the interpretation of timeless law. The changing event and the timeless law of our cosmology are both abstractions whereby we attempt to universalize our knowledge. The scientist does not imagine laws to rule on their own account; but he does assert an interdependence of phenomena actually or conceivably experienced which can be formulated as law. What his fruitful conception really comes to is that, scientifically considered, the universe is a series of events everywhere connected, whether they be events past, present, or to come. As Jevons says (*op. cit.*, p. 738-739), "Scientific inference is impossible, unless we may regard the present as the outcome of what is past and the cause of what is to come." The connections, or, in other words, the varied forms of relations between events are expressible as laws. Put into the crucible of philosophy, scientific law and scientific event alike resolve themselves into abstractions; and, when thus analyzed, they none the less demand a unity from which they receive their validity. The conceptions of the persistence of matter and the persistence of energy express the scientific conviction that the reality of an event is ever more than a mere event. The being of the universe at any one moment contains the secret of the whole. The fluctuations of a changeful universe are, to the scientist, bound together by their subordination to an inner nature which renders change possible; and the only exposition of the universe that is legitimately open to him lies in the abstract formulæ of events subject to principles or laws. Such principles tend to become ultimate according as they approach the requisite of an explanation—leaving no question to be asked—in other words, self-evident, though so far from being obvious that they are only obtainable by the infinite travail of human inquiry.

The present is thus more than the mere presence of events. It is the realization of the agencies of the past. It is the potential

which involves the realization of the future. The present is more than itself. The existing universe is, for the man of science, the necessary result of the completed past, the necessary antecedent of the whole future. But his knowledge of what *is* is fallible and imperfect.

Without again raising the question of making time valid as a universal datum, supposing that we were compelled to grant such universality to the time form, and that the scientific reconstruction of our experiences does directly and immediately, though but partially, reflect the Divine Life, what unification of that Life, other than a totally insufficient and merely formal one, can there be, if the infinite moments of its changes be not correlative to a pervading and eternal meaning.

Hence on the ground of merely intellectual data we are compelled to posit a Reason from which our phenomenal world of being and becoming, of the real and the valid, of the transient event and the timeless law derives itself. That is not always inconceivable which is, here and now, beyond being understood; and the Reason which I have thus definitely posited is indeed the presupposition of all thought.

But taking the higher ground of our moral nature we are compelled by the same sublime self-confidence of reason which prompts us to philosophize and which carries its own imperative mandate with it, to posit in God, not merely a Unity of permanence and change, and of the real and the valid, transcending human faculty to comprehend, but also the unity of our ideal aspirations with our actual world, of our moral struggle with the limitations that encumber it. Our knowledge implies as its ground or reason an awareness which transcends while it embraces human faculty. Man is the measure of all things in so far as he is necessary to and participates in the Divine Nature. By this participation he becomes aware of the existence of that fullness of being which as man he is not, and which, in his human and particular life, he cannot wholly become. He is bound to conceive of the Telos which he cannot comprehend. A foot-rule implies infinity but cannot measure it. Our power is adequate to the perception of the limitation of our faculty. The processes of reason are ever compelled to posit and point toward their Divine incomprehensible but necessary ground. That presupposi-

tion of thought—its self-consistence—which issues in the transcendental discovery of the Unity of the One Thinker, and of the Thinker with his Thought, seems to me to indicate with an irresistible confidence that there is an awareness in which the human life finds its fulfilment and meaning; while the boundaries set to our conscious experience as limited and particular, prohibit the entrance of the fulness of the nature of God into the passing show of His temporal life in us.

LEIBNITZ'S CRITIQUE OF LOCKE.¹

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY ALFRED G. LANGLEY.

NEW ESSAYS ON HUMAN UNDERSTANDING.

BOOK I.—INNATE IDEAS.

CHAPTER II.

No Innate Practical Principles.

§ 1. *Philaletes*. Ethics is a demonstrative science, and yet it has no innate principles. And, indeed, it would be very difficult to produce a rule of ethics of a nature to be settled by an assent as general and as prompt as this maxim: Whatever is, is.

Theophilus. It is absolutely impossible that there be truths of reason as evident as those which are identical or immediate. And, although you can truly say that ethics has principles which are not demonstrable, and that one of the first and most practical is, that you ought to pursue joy and avoid sorrow, it is needful to add that this is not a truth which is known purely by reason, since it is based upon internal experience, or upon confused knowledge, for you do not feel what joy or sadness is.

Ph. It is only through processes of reasoning, through language, and through some mental application, that you can be assured of practical truths.

Th. Though that were so, they would not be less innate. However, the maxim I just adduced appears of another nature; it is

¹ Continued from "The Journal of Speculative Philosophy," vol. xix, No. 3, July, 1885.